

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, April 22, 1917, with transcript

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL TO MABEL (Hubbard) BELL Sunday — on Get Away. April 22, 1917. Mrs. A. G. Bell, 1331 Connecticut Avenue, Washington, D. C. Mabelle, Mabel:

Yesterday (April 21) I looked inside my trunk for the first time since I came here and found a pasteboard box labelled "For Bobs — from his Godmother" and another package, unmarked containing a bunny. Bobby Baldwin was delighted with his railroad; and the baby was so fascinated with her bunny that she allowed me to approach her without crying and took the bunny from my hand. I immediately retreated so as to give her no opportunity for crying; and when I was a safe distance away she actually smiled at me.

Last night, or the night before, Kathleen attended a meeting of the Young Ladies' Club in Baddeck and Casey began to get quite uneasy at her non-appearance by 11 o'clock P.M. as there was quite a fog on the Bay. He was on board the Get Away with me and we went outside to see whether we could hear anything from her. I gave my characteristic whistle — and we heard a faint response from far away showing that she was on the Bay.

I kept up whistling at intervals to guide her on the Bay while Casey went to the Bungalow for a fog horn.

She had started from the Baddeck side in her canoe but had made a complete circle in the fog landing on the same side of the Bay near Lina McCurdy's place.

2

Here she sat upon the shore thinking that Casey would come for her, although there is no boat here available. She did not realize that my signals were for her guidance and sat on expecting Casey to put in an appearance.

Library of Congress

It was not until the fog horn commenced tooting that she understood we wanted her to come over in the canoe guided by the sound. Then she appeared in a very few minutes — and warmed herself by the houseboat fire.

The ice has all disappeared but no motor boats are yet available for towing. Expect the Gauldrie will be launched tomorrow.

I have brought down old note-books from the Point and Casey and I are reading up the accounts of towing experiments made in 1914. They are really quite interesting and I find that I have already solved some of the problems I had in mind to test here now. While we cannot make towing experiments it is a good plan to study up the old experiments that have already been made and keep the results in mind. These old experiments were really very satisfactory and conclusive upon the points tested; and we shall now be able to begin at the point we left off — without wasting time in useless repetitions.

While studying old experiments and waiting for motor boats, I have started out with experiments on the utilization of waste heat that I can try by myself on board the houseboat. I am trying to see what practical use could be made of the heat given off by a candle — by men in the trenches or in a dugout. 3 What they could do with a candle they could certainly do — and do better — with stronger sources of heat.

Last night (April 21) I placed a metallic dish of cold water in a wooden box lined with asbestos paper and admitted the hot air from an ordinary kerosene lamp.

In a short time the water became too hot to hold the hand in. This morning I substituted a candle-lantern for the kerosene lamp. It took longer to heat the water but after one hour it was too hot to hold the hand in, and I used the hot water to make myself a very satisfactory cup of coffee.

Library of Congress

Today (April 22) I wet a pair of woolen socks made by Kathleen for the soldiers at the front; and, after wringing them out, hung them up inside a bag.

I then suspended a candle-lantern below the open mouth of the bag and lighted the candle. Late this afternoon Casey came in and we took down the socks. They were quite dry excepting at the toes where they had been tucked round the upper hoop and were comfortable warm — although not as warm as I would have liked. Experiment, however, shows that even a candle can be used to dry damp things.

Your loving husband, Alec.